

Morse code is nostalgic, like the Model T and a Fokker tri-plane. I'm not being disrespectful; I'm making a very reasonable point. Many of us appreciate the history and art of a carefully restored and flown tri-plane. We also appreciate the history and art of a well-restored Model T driving down the road. Will Model T's and early 20th century aircraft ever go away? Probably not in the foreseeable future. Nor will Morse code.

Many of us have moved beyond the Model T and tri-planes. We all drive fast, technologically superior vehicles and ride in state-of-the-art commercial aircraft. It certainly doesn't mean we don't appreciate the old way of doing things.

There is value in knowing Morse code. The history, the art and the skill set those that use it apart from the rest. But, keep in mind there are several other forms of transmission on the amateur bands. From packet data, television, satellites, moon bounce, RTTY, SSB, FM, and a host of other acronyms, there is but one we have to show proficiency in, and that one is the oldest form of radio transmission of all. Morse code.

Would it make sense to be required to learn to drive a Model T, and prove such proficiency before being allowed to get my license to drive my SUV into the mountains where I can propagate to my heart's content? Would it make sense to be required to prove I can fly the old planes before getting into the seat of a modern airplane for a private pilot license?

Over 50 telegraph stations by 1851 were using Morse code. The Model T began rolling out in 1908. The Fokker tri-plane was first flown around 1916. Though I would agree that Morse code still has value on the amateur bands for a variety of reasons, I would have to continue to question the requirement to show proficiency before advancing our licenses.

There is no requirement to show proficiency before operating in other modes. Knowledge of rules and regulations, electronics theory, antenna design and other basic knowledge levels must be shown. But there is no requirement to show proficiency in speaking, antenna design and building, digital data transfer or any other skill aside from receiving and sending Morse code.

Those without the equipment or know-how will surely avoid trying to send digital data, or television pictures over their radios. Those without the skills or desire to send signals bouncing from the moon or rebroadcast from a satellite won't get involved in those transmission modes. Just as those without proficiency in Morse code will avoid that form of communication. Following the current logic of requiring proficiency in Morse code, why do we not provide testing for antenna design and building, connecting and using data modems and effective voice communications (as well as others)?

The FCC previously made clear the only reason Morse code proficiency testing was still an element required for the amateur bands was due to the international requirement that existed at that time. The rest of the world has recognized the antiquated requirement to prove proficiency in this mode of transmission. With the United States being a world leader I am surprised this issue is still alive.

Let's remove the requirement for Morse code testing. I'm not suggesting we take anything away from those that still desire to use Morse code. I don't oppose current coordination rules for the Morse code transmissions. It just doesn't make sense anymore to require everyone to learn something that most will forget within one year just to advance their licenses.

Some argue that to do away with the code requirement would open the door to less-serious operators. I argue that to keep a stumbling block in the way of those with far superior talents, we are hurting the advancement of this hobby and art.

Respectfully submitted

Bart Hamilton
KD7VLC